



LEGISLATIVE BRIEF

Rural Health Safety Net Grants



Overview

The purpose of the Georgia Department of Community Health's (DCH) State Office of Rural Health (SORH) Safety Net Grants is to facilitate the economic development and the creation of sustainable, non-traditional, regional health care delivery systems that are financially viable and designed to meet the needs of the citizens within rural regions.

The SORH awarded \$1.5 million in grants to six regional community groups. Phase 1 funded planning and development so communities could establish a health care delivery system fulfilling the programmatic goals of establishing and maintaining a self-sustaining health care delivery system to improve health status and stimulate the local economy.

Grant applications were requested through the DCH grant solicitation process using development team criteria. Ten communities responded by August 6, 2007 and were evaluated on following criteria:

- Complexity and diversity of the partnerships of the collaboration
- Evidence of shared decision-making authority
- Demonstration of a comprehensive approach
- Evidence of the ability to develop a health care delivery system to improve health status
- Geographic scope and/or service area
- Demonstration of need
- Illustration of potential impact

Rural Health Safety Net (RHSN) Phase 2 funding is currently deferred in the Governor's Amended FY 09 (\$9.5M) and FY 10 (\$9.5M) Budgets.

Program Outcomes

The following proposals were approved for funding during Phase I:

• Central Georgia's Regional System of Health	\$321,500
• West Georgia Rural Community Health Network	\$250,000
• Spring Creek Health Cooperative	\$225,000
• Rural Eastern Access Consortium for Health (REACH)	\$201,000
• Three Ring Health Care Consortium	\$200,000
• <u>Ty Cobb Health Care System</u>	<u>\$302,500</u>
Total Funding:	\$1,500,000

Each health system was required to produce:

- Formalized written partnership agreements demonstrating collaboration
- A business plan for redesigning the health system
- A financial feasibility and sustainability plan
- A community needs assessment
- An evaluation plan demonstrating return on investment and economic impact

The six grantees engaged 30 counties representing a patient population of 896,073. Each lead applicant is from a rural county. All counties are federally designated as Medically Underserved with twenty-six also designated as Health Professional Shortage Areas.

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Summaries of each grantee are as follows:

Central Georgia's Regional System of Health, (Health Care Central GA, Inc)

Award: \$321,500

The consortium is composed of a broad-base of representatives from health, education, business and community stakeholders for the development of:

- A consumer-driven plan to improve the social factors determining health
- A provider-crafted plan for the regionalization of health care resources
- A plan based on economic aspects of good health, and
- The creation of a new vision for the region's health and health system
- **Region:** Central
- **Population served:** 356,801
- **Counties served:**
 - 1. Bibb
 - 2. Crawford
 - 3. Houston
 - 4. Jones
 - 5. Monroe
 - 6. Peach
 - 7. Twiggs

West Georgia Rural Community Health Network, (Higgins General Hospital);

Award: \$250,000

Higgins General Hospital serves as the lead organization of 13 health care and service organizations to improve health care in West Georgia. The network facilitated the evaluation and development of a coordinated health care delivery system designed to minimize duplicate services in an effort to build efficiency and to better meet the needs of the region. A major component was the development of an electronic medical record which will greatly improve health care delivery and patient care. A focus of the group is a medication assistance program to improve access to medications for the lower income residents in the region. The network will facilitate a community needs assessment and strategic planning process based on:

- Primary care access
- Electronic medical records implementation
- Medication assistance programs, and
- Behavioral health
- **Region:** Northwest
- **Population served:** 123,970
- **Counties served:**
 - 1. Carroll
 - 2. Haralson
 - 3. Heard

Spring Creek Health Cooperative; Award: 225,000

The cooperative will build on the expansion of a coordinated health care delivery system serving the citizens of Southwest Georgia. Collaborating to build upon efficiencies within the system will improve the availability of health care and lead to long-term sustainability and increase access to health care for all. Spring Creek's focuses include:

- Conducting health assessments
- The planning and assessment of behavioral health care delivery
- Evaluating the feasibility of health technology, and
- Expanding primary care delivery
- **Region:** Southwest
- **Population served:** 214,854

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- **Counties served:**

1. Brooks
2. Clay
3. Calhoun
4. Colquitt
5. Decatur
6. Early
7. Grady
8. Miller
9. Mitchell
10. Seminole
11. Thomas

Rural Eastern Access Consortium for Health (REACH – doing business as TenderCare Clinic, Inc); Award: \$201,000

REACH is comprised of health care providers and community leaders who will investigate the expansion of community health centers. Centers will provide access to primary care and minimize the burden on local emergency rooms. REACH believes health centers are the most appropriate setting for delivering non-emergent care so that emergency rooms can focus on those patients most in urgent need. The group will focus on outreach, preventive care services and care coordination. They will develop a regional approach to health care delivery, including:

- Completion of a regional needs assessment,
- Business plan development,
- Assessment of emergency room use; and
- Development of consumer driven health care system.
- **Region:** East
- **Population served:** 48,675
- **Counties served:**
 1. Green
 2. Morgan
 3. Putnam

Three Ring Health Care Consortium, (Liberty County Public Health); Award: \$200,000

The Three Ring Health Care Consortium (TRHCC) project will create a comprehensive health care delivery system focusing on enhanced health services, education and developing healthier lifestyle habits. The Three Ring Health Care Consortium proposes to:

- Develop a regional multi-county consortium non-profit organization through a 501-C3,
- Facilitate community assessments,
- Evaluate the health care workforce and workforce development in the region; and
- Serve as the catalyst to evaluate the regional health care safety net and develop an appropriate plan to address the identified needs.
- **Region:** Coastal
- **Population served:** 82,761
- **Counties served:**
 1. Liberty
 2. Long
 3. McIntosh

The project addresses the needs for expanded emergency medical services and communication services, and embraces the principles outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP) for Phase II applications.

Ty Cobb Health Care System; Award: \$302,500

Ty Cobb Health Care System serves as the collaborative lead for the development of a health care system focused on community wellness, hospital services and development of geriatric care, psychiatry, long-term rehabilitation, substance abuse, mental health care and urgent care.

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The system will focus on three major objectives:

- Assessing the feasibility of consolidation of a least two community hospitals,
- Identifying and planning for consumer driven health care; and
- Implementing wellness and prevention programs at the community level.
- **Region:** Northeast
- **Population served:** 69,012
- **Counties served:**
 1. Hart
 2. Franklin
 3. Madison